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Arrested Development: Understanding the Identity Construction of Queer Students of Color at a Small Liberal Arts University in the Midwest

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Oral Presentation O10.2

**ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT: UNDERSTANDING THE IDENTITY
CONSTRUCTION OF QUEER STUDENTS OF COLOR AT A SMALL
LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY IN THE MIDWEST**

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College is often a critical time for the maturation of one's identity; raising awareness of the influences of race, class, gender, and sexual identity. However, there is a persistent tension in the identity construction of queer students of color on campus that is related to the essentialization and politics of identity at IWU. This is present in the interaction of students of multiple marginalized identities with their peers and faculty who reject the students, multi-faceted identities in favor of a single essentialized identity. The campus climate pressures students to adopt an essentialized identity while discouraging the open construction of a more complex identity. The finding of this study suggest a need to address this rejection which is institutionalized via curriculum and University programs that promote and privilege normativity over the experiences of individuals of multiple marginalized identities.